

*Subjective experiences of youth living in poverty:
reflexive orientations and the process of self-stereotyping*

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Outline

- i. *Reflexivity* as a *mediating mechanism* between *social* contexts in which poverty exists and *subjective* experiences of young people
- ii. Understand youth poverty *vis-à-vis* the emergence of “self-stereotyping”
- iii. Systematise reflexive experiences in order to theorise self-stereotyping processes and identity formation in young people experiencing poverty



The dominant discourse of youth poverty (often):

- entails homogeneous representations of youth identities;
- ignores the voices of youth living in poverty.

Media/government ministers (often):

- construct poverty as an individual, personal failure;
- contribute to a stigmatised representation of poverty.

Sociological literature (often):

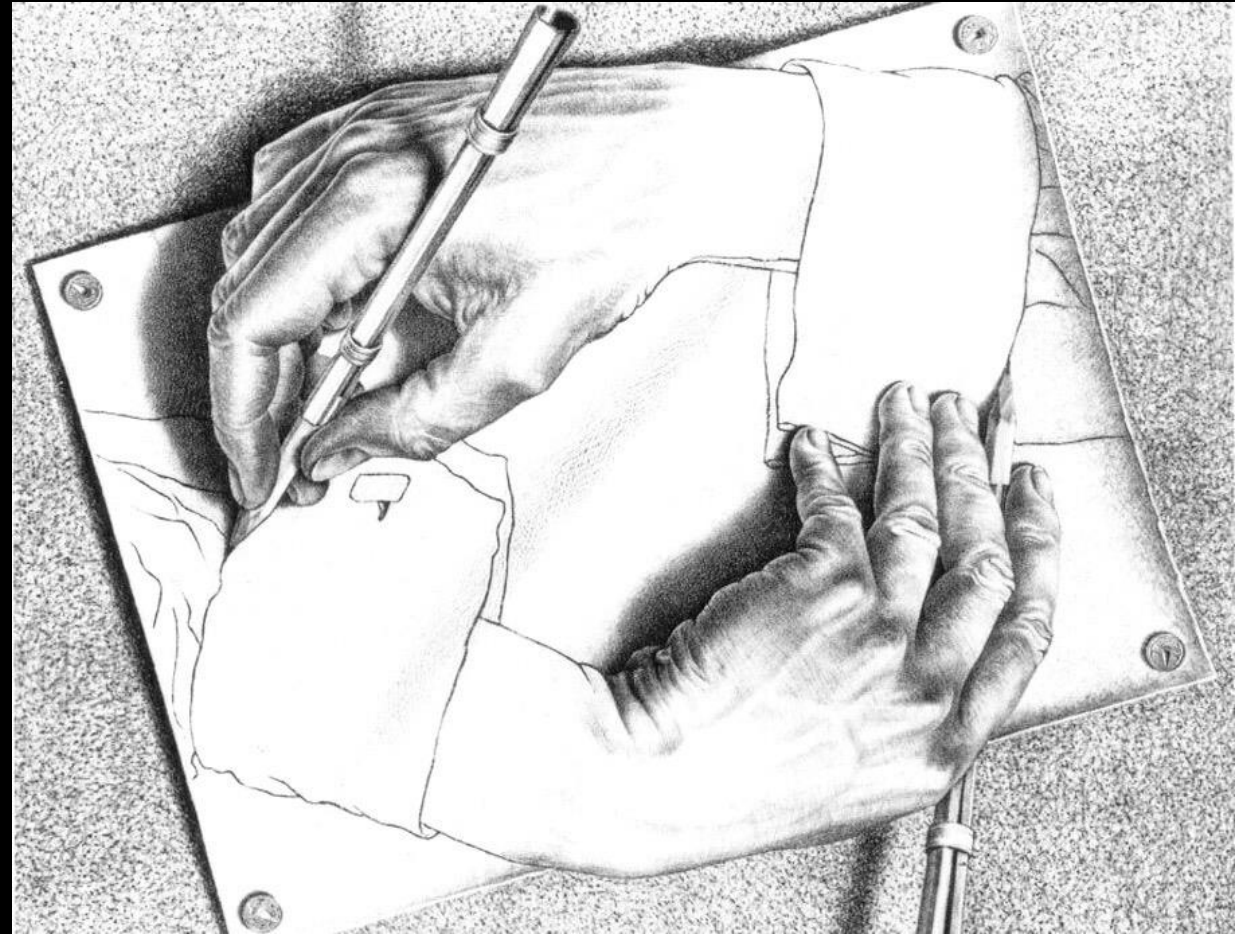
- concentrates on structural factors;
- emphasises breadth over depth.



1. Reflexivity as a type of practice among sociologists

- activity of reflexive self-understanding
- aim of promoting transparency and candour in the research process

The researcher's observations or activities within the social system impinge on the state of affairs they are observing.



2. Reflexivity as functioning in relation to enduring aspects of agency

- habitual behaviour as our main action-guiding “force”
- reflexivity is made active as a result of structural *disruption*

Identity formation is socially embedded within everyday life, rather than a result of reflexive practices.



3. Reflexivity as associated with the *mediating* process

- linking the agent to her/his (external) social context
- emphasis is being placed on intra-activity, social disembeddedness and human agency

This take on reflexivity is hostile to any talk of embodied dispositions pertaining to reflexive capacities.



How do socioeconomic conditions affect identity processes and life trajectories?

- How can we build a bridge between understanding the social dimension of youth poverty and the subjective experiences of youth living in poverty?
- How can reflexivity be *both* an agentic capacity *and* socially embedded?



Reflexivity: “capable of turning or bending back on itself”

- Mead: “the turning back of the experience of the individual upon [her-/himself]”
- a *subject’s* experience, awareness or consideration of a *perceived object* “bends back” on the *subject*

- “reflexive experiences”
- mediating mechanism
- different reflexive capacities



How do reflexive experiences relate to “stock of knowledge”?

“All interpretation of this world,” Schutz’s thought, “is based upon a stock of previous experiences of it.”

Actors use their stocks of knowledge as deep-background configurations of experiences to:

- frame how they see themselves and others;
- increase their capacity for interactive discourse;
- enable them to navigate the social world.



Self-stereotyping

- a process by which individuals tend to perceive themselves with stereotypical features of social groups and consequently behave in line with their social identity.

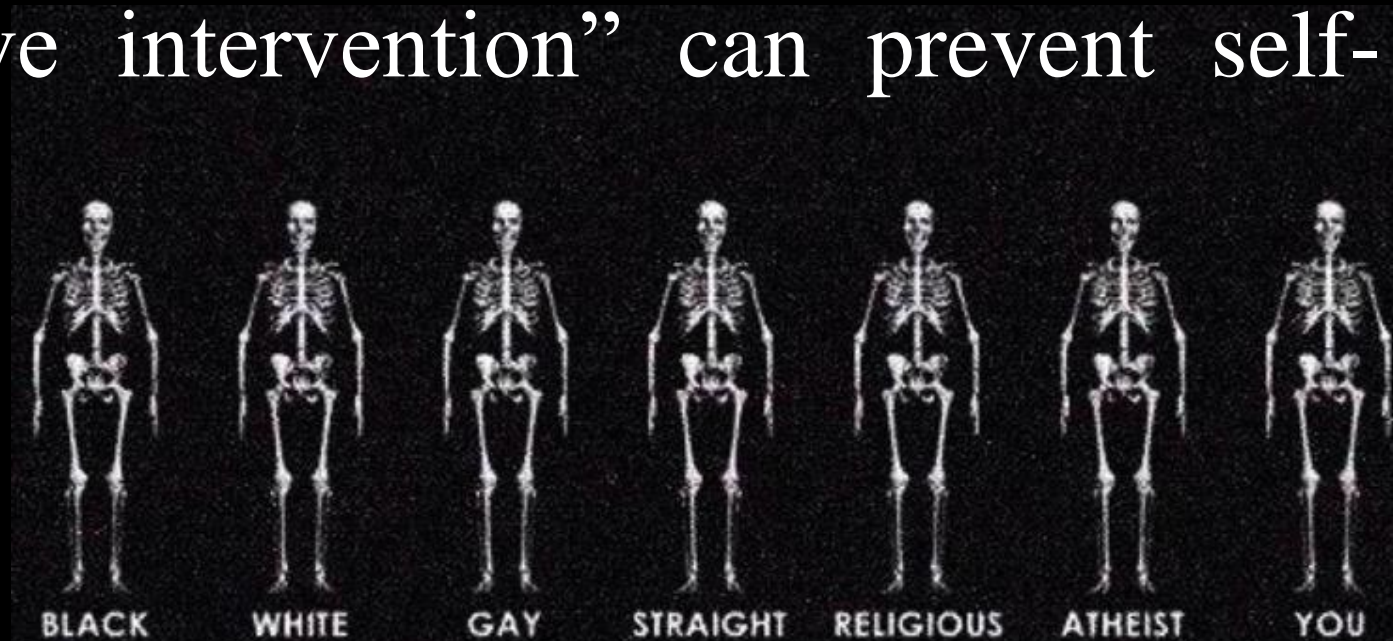
Negative stereotyping of YP living in poverty affect the way youth from disadvantaged backgrounds view themselves

- *self-stereotyping* acts as a potential barrier to YP experiencing poverty.



Empirical research challenge: different reflexive capacities

- investigate:
 - *how* reflexive experiences may evoke *self-stereotyping* behaviours;
 - what type of “reflexive intervention” can prevent self-stereotyping.
- *meta-reflexive* orientations?



Methodology

- How do we study youth-identity formation *vis-à-vis* reflexive processes taking account of the *mediating mechanism* and *lived experiences* of stigmatising representations of youth poverty?
- Interpretative phenomenological analysis?
 - lived experiences from the perspective of the interviewee



Thematic analysis

→ layers of coding:

1. personal identity? social identity? self-stereotyping?
2. discrepancy between personal identity and social identity?
3. identities formed through *reflexive experiences* or *meta-reflexive* orientations?
4. how are identities articulated?



Data collection (in-depth and semi-structured interviews)							
	Interview themes				Interview observations		
	(1) Brief biography of subject S _i .	Social identity		Personal identity	Discrepancy between (2)/(3) and (4)?	Self-stereotyping tendencies?	How does S _i talk about (1) – (4)?
		(2) How do others see S _i ?	(3) How does S _i see his/her relationship with others?	(4) How does S _i see him-/herself?			
What to look for during the interview and in participant's answers	Close family and/or community ties?	Examples of lived experiences					Inevitable / natural phenomena?
	Independent and/or self-reliant?						Socially constructed phenomena?
Participant A							
Participant B							
Participant C							
Etc. ($N < 30$)							

In sum,

1. *Reflexivity* as a *mediating mechanism* between social contexts in which poverty exists and subjective experiences of youth
2. Youth-identities are constructed *and* reproduced through different *reflexive orientations*
3. Systematise reflexive experiences in order to theorise self-stereotyping processes in youth experiencing poverty
4. Empirical operationalisation also permits us to see *how* YP may *prevent* self-stereotyping behaviours

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